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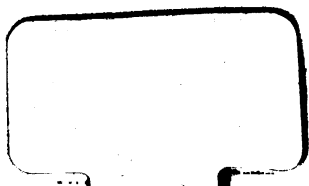
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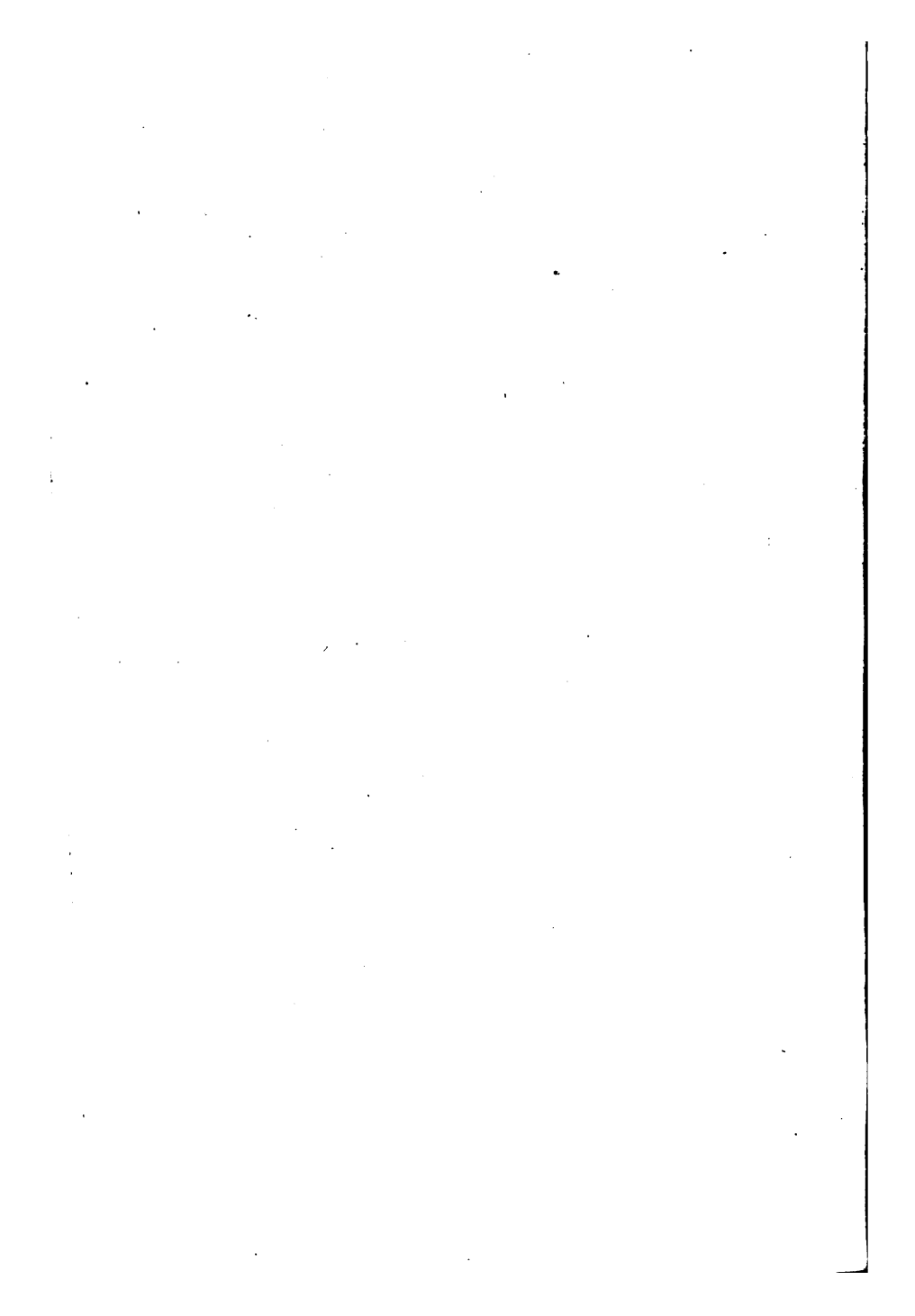
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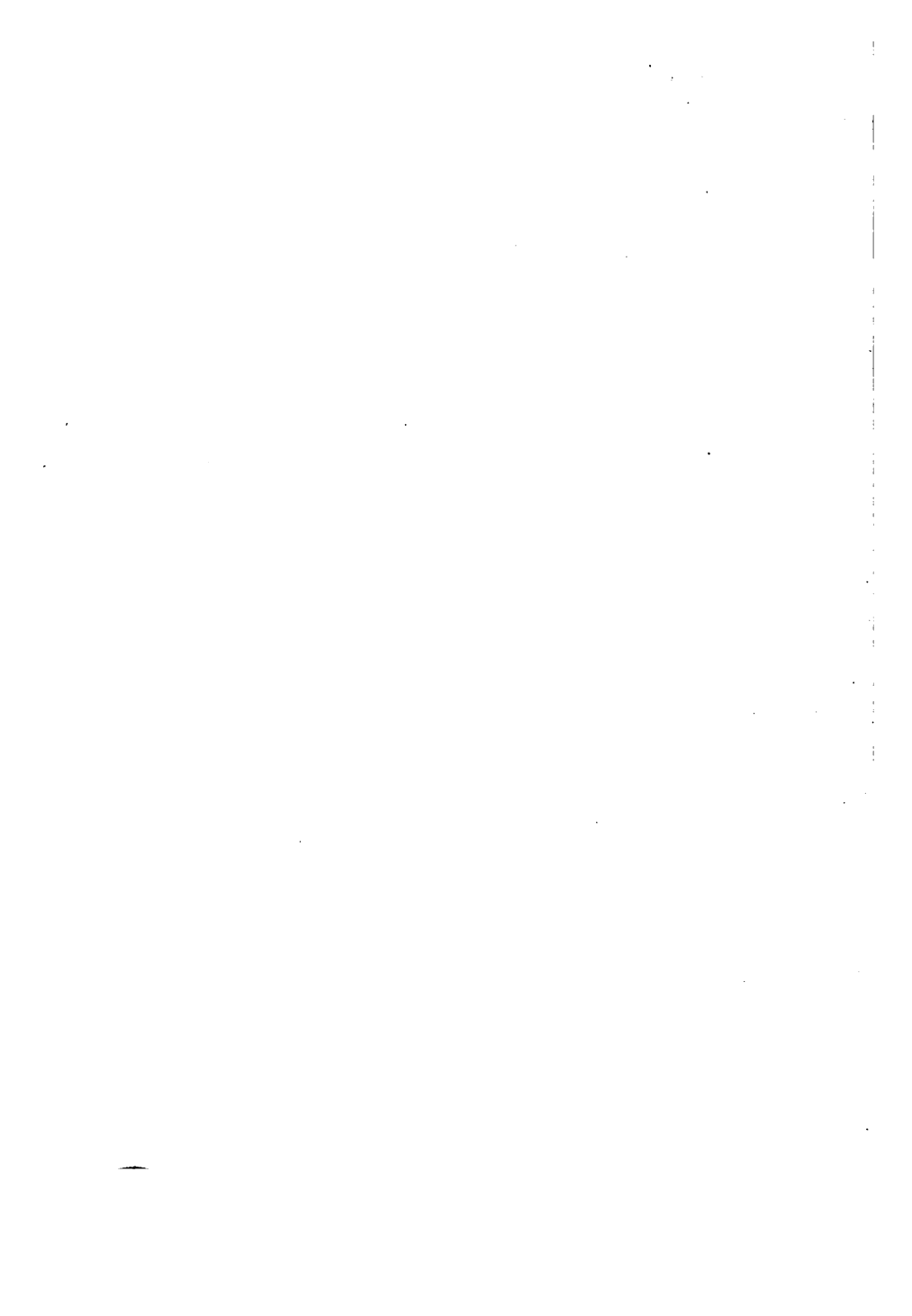


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VAGRANT VERSES



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VAGRANT VERSES

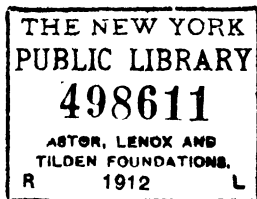
BY

MODESTE HANNIS JORDAN

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1912
M.



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TO
ELIZA McMILLAN
MY FRIEND

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**My thanks are herewith extended to the newspaper
and magazine editors through whose courtesy I gather
between covers these few of my many scattered verses.**

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VAGRANT VERSES

TO MY VAGRANT VERSES

Little children of my brain,
 (Far and near you roam!)
Tell me of your faring, dears,
 Would you be at home?

From the hush of quiet room,
 On bright days and drear,
Forth you went all cheerily,
 Or with sigh and tear.

A few I've gathered from your clan,
 Others far have strayed,
Lost to me beyond recall,
 Forgotten, or mislaid.

Little children of my brain,
 If just one, may be,
Has found lodgment in a heart,
 God has honored me.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE SIMPLER WAY

Not with the strong would I run,
Not with the doubters of good,
Not in the glare of the sun,
But rather the shade of the wood.

Not for the throng's plaudit wild,
Not for the ransom of kings
Would I barter the kiss of a child,
Or my joy in a bird when it sings.

VAGRANT VERSES

INDIAN SUMMER

There's a glint of gold in the hazy air,
And a redder light to the setting sun,
There's a hush and a calm that the Spring recked not,
And a mystic silence when day is done.

There's a note of regret in the far, faint cry
Of the quail as she goes the wheat-field through,
For there's nothing but stubble to hide her way,
And the empty nest lies bare to the dew.

There's a dream that comes when the sun goes low,
And shadows grow long at the foot of the hill,—
'Tis a dream, 'tis a dream of the long-ago,
And 'tis dreamed again with a strange, sweet thrill.

Oh, a wondertime is the time o' the year
When the days are all gold and the twilights so long,
And the heart throbs afresh to dream over a dream
Or remember the lilt of an old, old love-song!

VAGRANT VERSES

WHERE THE TOWN AND THE COUNTRY MEET

Away where stretches that hazy line
Where the town and the country meet,—
That line where the city's confines lie
And the meadows begin, so sweet—
It seems to me that a mystic spell
Possesses my heart and brain
When I cross that bound'ry and enter a while
To walk in Nature's domain.

I feel, as I catch the first sweet breath
Of clover-scented air,
That a higher power my whole soul claims,
And I pause for a moment there
And wonder, when waiting at heaven's gate,
With all life's battles complete,
I shall not feel as I do when I stand
Where the town and the country meet.

VAGRANT VERSES

LENGTHENING SHADOWS

A mystic, golden-glintoned haze wraps all around,
Across the waving meadow grass sweet notes resound
Of nesting lark, and "Bob White" sounding clear,
While corn-flowers bend to kiss the poppies growing
near.

The mystic, golden-glintoned haze creeps farther still,
And lingers but to crown the brow of some far hill
With light resplendent, then, in softer mood,
Steals down the slope to rest within the wood.

A brooding, tender stillness fills the languid air,—
A stillness fraught with meaning as some whispered
prayer;
And Pan pipes low, and night-birds heed the call
When o'er the wooded path the length'ning shadows
fall.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE CONQUEROR

With sword, and shield, and lordly mien,
Pride rode forth one day.
Never surer tread was seen
On the wide highway.

Gleamed the sword and gleamed the shield,—
Strong 'gainst any fray.
Others weapons, too, might wield,
Pride would win the day.

From a little shadowed spot
By the wide highway,
Love stepped forth, and trembled not
At the bold array.

“Make room!” cried Pride with cruel thrust;
Love did not obey.
Sword and shield lay in the dust
Ere the end of day.

VAGRANT VERSES

LEAVE-TAKING

You, who do not know, stand by the door and watch
from there,
Impatient at the long delay and foolish care
With which I take each little thing from its accustomed
place,—
The tiny clock, and old Satsuma vase,
The imaged Virgin and the Child,
And winsome Psyche who has smiled
At her brook-mirrored beauty,—trifles, all,—
And yet, and yet the hours that they recall!

To you who stand beside the door and watch from
there,
Impatient at the long delay and foolish care,—
I know the tender touch, the lingering hand
Are reasonless to you, who do not understand
And count the little room, at best, but a poor place,
With meagre share of sunlight, lacking grace
Of rare, rich hangings that so subtly please
And charm the fancy and invite to ease;
You cannot know that here, that here was built a shrine
Where my soul worshiped, learning the divine
Sweet mystery of love; that 'tis the place
Where love lies buried. But I hide the trace
Of tear, lest you should know. The secret's mine,—
The secret of the grave and of the shrine!

VAGRANT VERSES

THE WEEDS

Forgotten mothers of proud daughters, they,
Crushed under foot along the dun highway,
Bruised, ruthless-felled by sickle, flung aside,
And no man marks the day they came or when they
died.

Still patiently returning, year by year,
Nor showing sign of shrinking or of fear,
Come those of the same root, or branch, or seed,
Telling their rosary,—a century each bead.
In stalk, and leaf, and every vein there flows
That which gave life and grace to Lady Rose
And countless others, of name held as dear,
Who, barren, tremble shrinkingly and fear
Each chill wind, or the sun's too ardent gaze,
In snug house or in sheltered garden ways—

While 'long the highway, spite of dry, grey dust,
Or heedless foot or sickle's cruel thrust,
In field where doom is sealed by man's relentless hand,
The weeds, like Spartan mothers praying, stand!

VAGRANT VERSES

THE CALL OF THE CITY

Faint and far, like a thing of dreams,
With palace and mart and spire,
With the tread of a million hurrying feet,
With hope and regret and desire,
The city lies, and it calls with a voice
That touches men's souls with fire.

The fields stretch far to the rim of the day,
And afar to the rising sun,
The valleys between bear lilies white
As the hood of a cloistered nun;
The winds of heaven, untrammelled and sweet,
Fan meadow and fen and fall,—
But ever and ever the wind fares forth
With its burden, the city's call.

The maid who dreams by the side of the brook
That flows from the niche in the hill
Heeds not that the bird on the blossoming bough
Sits mute to hear her trill
The tender lilt of an old love-song,
For she catches the throng's acclaim
In the voice of the brook and the whispering
breeze,—
They bring her the message of Fame.

The youth, with his hand on the stubborn plow,
As furrow on furrow he turns,

VAGRANT VERSES

Bares his head to the tempter breeze,
And a wondrous fire there burns
In the depths of his steadfast, grave young eyes
As he stands there, strong and tall,—
For over the hush of the fallow field
Comes stealing the city's call.

The student, bending to parchment and page,
While the midnight oil burns low,
Delves on and on, for the way is long
That the searcher for truth must go,—
But a glow o'erspreads his strange, wan face
As he lets the last page fall,
For into the quiet, shadowed room
Comes creeping the city's call.

Faint and far, like a thing of dreams,
With palace and mart and spire,
With the tread of a million hurrying feet,
With hope and regret and desire—
The city lies, and it calls with a voice
That touches men's souls with fire.

VAGRANT VERSES

FINITUDE

With pen poised a moment I said, "I will write
A song, story, a sonnet, a poem to-night,"—
When you came and you bent and you gave me a kiss,
And my hands clung to you lest your nearness they'd
miss:

In the kiss was the song, the story,—all told,
The harmony, longing of ages unrolled.
Then my pen knew its cunning could never portray
A soul's infinite yearning,—so I put it away.

VAGRANT VERSES

A MINOR

It was Springtime when you came, dear,
Flowers bloomed and birds sang gay,
It was Springtime all the long year,—
Till you went away.

It was Springtime when you came, dear,
Blossoms clung to every spray,
But the year has known no Springtime,—
Since you went away.

VAGRANT VERSES

BECAUSE

(Song)

How do I know that I love thee?
Because, when some joy so rare
Steals into my soul till the gladness
Seems more than my full heart can bear,—
Then,—then I think of thee, dearest,
With gladness comes longing for thee,
For joy unshared with thee, dearest,
Misses fullness of joy for me.

How do I know that I love thee?
Because, when grey sorrow draws nigh
I long,—long to fly to thee, dearest,
Well knowing the tear or the sigh
Will find in thine heart an echo,—
An exquisite echo of pain,
And I,—and I, drawing near thee,
Will know something of gladness again.

VAGRANT VERSES

LAND HUNGER

'Tis not enough that ships from far-off shores
Come to the docks full-laden with rich stores
That sun and wind and rain have coaxed to grow
And ripen quick in lands that know no snow:

'Tis not enough that markets crowd and gleam
High-heaped with fruit and leaf that truly seem
To hold within themselves each gracious smile
That Nature used to charm them and beguile:

I want a little patch of ground stretched 'neath
the sun,
Or, mayhap, shadow sometimes, where there runs
A clear stream past a door that's eastward thrown,
I want a tree to call my very own!

VAGRANT VERSES

ROSES RED AND ROSES WHITE

Roses red and roses white
Plucked I for my love's delight;
Pale, aloof, the white rose stood,
Passion-bold the red rose's mood,—
Each alone all incomplete,
Bold red rose and white rose sweet,
So I bound them, white and red,
Close together ere youth sped.

Roses red and roses white,
Plucked I for my love's delight.

VAGRANT VERSES

A SONG OF THE THANKFUL TIME

For all of the earth's abundant yield,—
For the pale wild rose and the rich grain field,
For the blanket of snow and the meadows, sun-kissed,
For the joys we know and the sorrows we missed,—
We offer a pean of praise.

For love, like a lamp that has lit our feet,
For work, that has made our rest more sweet,
For health,—a triune blessing from heaven,
For these rich gifts and more to us given,—
We offer a tribute of praise.

For peace, like a dove with wings soft-spread
O'er valorous living,—and patriot dead,—
For a land that is one from sea unto sea
And strong in the might of a fixed unity,—
The God of our fathers we praise.

VAGRANT VERSES

ONCE ON A DAY

Once on a day the sky's far blue meant heaven's smile;
The flowers upsprang where fairies tread the while,
The rain was heaven's tears, the watching stars eyes
true;

Now all these things mean, dear,—

Just you.

In sky's far blue, in soft rains, earthward sent,
In white rose's breath or violet's shy content,
In morning sunshine or in midnight dew,
My soul's white hands stretch forth to find—

Just you.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE DREAM-CHILD

When twilight has dropped her grey curtain,
And the slim, silv'ry moon is hung low
In the blue of the infinite heavens,
And birds back to sheltered nests go,
Then softly I croon an old lullaby—
Half more a prayer than a song,
And hold in my hand's yearning hollow
Two tiny feet, rosy and warm.

A drowsy head rests on my bosom,
My arms fold in ecstasy while
They clasp closer, closer my baby
Who stirs in his sleep but to smile.
Soon I tip-toe with arms gladly burdened
To a crib that is downy and white,
And tenderly tuck in the cov'let,
And stealthily lower the light.

Then with needle so happily plying
I fashion a dear garment small,
A marvel of muslin and laces,—
There are dozens and dozens in all,
For over and over I've stitched them,
Each seam was so lovingly sewn,—
But they, with the quaint crooning prayer-song,
Are the child's that I never have known!

VAGRANT VERSES

THE SHELTER

I builded a nook where the cavernous depths
Of the ocean of life, with its low, ceaseless moan,
Only sounded afar, and I knew that its waves,
Though lashing in fury, no closer could come.
So safe was I there, in my nook on the heights,
That I laughed and I scoffed at the rudest alarms
Of the grey, mocking world, for I knew that my heart
Had its shelter supernal in your loving arms.

VAGRANT VERSES

INDIAN SONG

As long as the moon swings in the sky,
As long as the river flows to the sea,
As long as the eagle's nest is high,
As long as the woodland life is free—
The brave Red Man shall hold his own
With arrow tipped with sharpest stone.

Where the fleet-foot deer comes down to drink
At the mountain brook in a shadowed place,
Where the panther crouches on the brink,
And the tracks of the wolf on the sod are traced,—
There the Red Man without fear does roam,
For the heart of the forest is his home.

As long as the moon swings in the sky,
As long as the river flows to the sea,
As long as the eagle's nest is high,
As long as the woodland life is free,—
The brave Red Man shall hold his own
With arrow tipped with sharpest stone.

VAGRANT VERSES

SONG OF THE WINGED THINGS

In and out among night's dusky shadows we go,
O'er the mountains high and the valleys low,
And guard we keep while mortals sleep,
In the heart of the wood so deep.

When the silvery moon in the heavens swings,
The owl wakes up and softly sings,
"Too-woo, too-woo, is that you, that you?"
And the grey moths flutter their wings.

In and out among night's dusky shadows we go,
O'er the mountains high and the valleys low,
Till dawn awakes, and then we flee
To the deep woodland where none may see.

VAGRANT VERSES

BIRD SONG

Sing again, sweet bird! In thy song is the thrilling
Of hearts that know love, of hearts that know pain.
Sing again, sweet bird, for thy song is the telling
Of all that love sighs to express, but in vain.
Sing again, sweet bird, sing again, sing again!

Sing again, sweet bird! In thy song is the pleading
That heaven must hear, that heaven must own.
Sing again, sweet bird, and the echoes awaking,
Thy love song shall hear and make it their own.
Sing again, sweet bird, sing again, sing again!

VAGRANT VERSES

NIGHT COMES

The sun goes down behind the purple hills,
A lone bird's call the holy silence thrills,
Night pins her curtain with a star, and dreams
Float from the flower hearts and soft moonbeams.

The day has gladly laid her heavy burden down;
Peace rests upon the far and busy town.
Heaven's benediction falls, and angels vigil keep,
Come, thou, O silver-sandaled mystic, sleep.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE SPIRIT OF SLEEP

Sleep on, O earth, forget thy sorrow and weeping;
Pale stars till day their guard are keeping;
The moon, a brooding mother, watches over all,
The dews from heaven gently fall;
Sleep on, O earth, forget thy sorrow and weeping,
Sleep on, the guards of night the gates are keeping,
Sleep on!

Sleep on, O earth, upon thy bosom warm are laid
Thy children, who with weary feet have strayed
In paths afar and many a tangled way;
Sweet rest be theirs until another day;
Sleep on, O earth, forget thy sorrow and weeping,
Sleep on, the guards of night the gates are keeping,
Sleep on!

VAGRANT VERSES

THE CALL

Oh, sad is the heart of the man, and cold,
Who hoards his wealth and counts his gold,
Who shuts himself in a palace dim,
And feels not the stir of the soul in him
 When the woods and the river are calling.

Oh, glad is the heart of the man, and warm,
Tho' rags he wears and a hut his home,
Who lists with his soul to the music sweet,
And hastes to the woodland with eager feet
 When the woods and the river are calling.

VAGRANT VERSES

JUST WE TWO

(Song)

I long to go away with you,
Where the fields are green and the skies are blue,
Where there is no music but the breeze,
That whispers through the leafy trees.
To roam in a garden old, yet new,
A primal Eden,—just we two.

I long to go away with you,
Where the fields are green and the skies are blue,
To whisper the story old, yet new,
The story of love so tender and true,
To roam in a garden, dear, with you,
A primal Eden,—just we two.

VAGRANT VERSES

WHEN THE MOTHERS CALL THEM IN

The city's streets, when busy day is done,
Wake to the clamor of the childish throng
Who take possession of the clearer ways,—
For twilight's coming they have waited all day long.

An hundred little feet pace up and down,
Across the way a swift ball, reckless, goes,
And roller-skates upon the pavements hum,
And other joys are loosed that only childhood knows.

There may be those who count the pleasant sounds
A nuisance, and a needless city din;
But I,—but I, who have no little child,
Am sorry when the mothers call them in.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW

Have you heard the legend of the great Catskills,
Of the captain's mystic crew,
Who haunt the hills of the lordly stream,
Of the Hudson wide and blue?

Each twenty years, as time goes by,
The captain and his men
Hold revel high in the hills hard by,
And then they are off again.

Beware the hunter who goes that way,
Beware the Half-moon's crew,
Beware the schnapps that they drink full deep,
Beware of their tempting brew.

Who drinks shall sleep for twenty years,
And none shall know the place,
Fast will he sleep,—aye, fast, indeed,—
In the mountains' stern embrace.

Ah, revels high hold the mystic crew,
And drink they long and deep,
Aye, fast, indeed,—aye, fast, indeed,—
Is their victim's mountain sleep.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE LADY NASTURTIIUM

Dainty, bewitching, she stands there tip-tilted,
Like a gay fairy dancer in a mad pirouette,
She harks and she bends to the bold blackbird's calling,
Nor heeds he low chiding of quaint Mignonette.

Oh, she's dressed in the red of a cardinal's liking,
Or the white, spotless white, of a cloistered nun,
In the twilight she lists to the Night-Wind's low
whisper,
In the morn lifts her face to the kiss of the sun.

At the dawn she awakes like a challenge to sleepers,
Impetuous, perfumed, she calls, "Come, come out!"
The dread, chilling North Wind?—she'll laugh and defy
it;
The drear chilling East Wind?—she'll tease and
she'll flout.

Oh, there's gossip a-plenty among her fair sisters,
"The Lady Nasturtium is bold," they declare;
But her lovers crowd round, and the spell of her glad-
ness
She flings to the sun and the birds and the air.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE KENTUCKY CARDINAL

Deep in the gloom of cedar and fir tree,
Like a flame from some altar of sacrifice sent,
Now balanced a moment on slender twig bending,
Now resting in shadows in shy, sweet content,—
Hear the call? Is it gladness,
Or measured to sadness,
The few liquid notes that are heavenward sent?

Deep is the gloom of cedar and fir tree,
But close to the trellis the star jasmine clings;
There's a flash of the flame wings, the white blossoms
quiver,
Just a light, tilting poise while his love song he sings
'Mid their grace and their perfume,
Then back to the deep gloom
Of cedar and fir tree on tremulous wings.

VAGRANT VERSES

MY LADY ROSE HELD COURT

My Lady Rose held court, 'mid flowers fair;
A king and courtier did her homage there,
And warriors, wearing sign of many a war,
And travellers, came they, too, from near and far,—
The sailor who'd touched port in far, strange land,
The weary wanderer over desert sand,—
Each tried the other to outdo and prove
Himself of Lady Rose the staunchest love.
But while she smiled,—as well a queen might smile,
Knowing full well all hearts she can beguile
To beat more warmly and to feel
At her near presence warm life steal
Through quickening pulse,—just then the shadows
 stirred
And forth a little cripple came, like some pale bird.
The Lady Rose bent, tenderwise, while close he
 crept,—
She felt the fulness of his love, and, turning, wept.

VAGRANT VERSES

WHEN APRIL CAME

When April came, the dainty flowers arose to greet her,
Glad streams leapt free from Winter's clasp to meet
her,
Athwart the grey a fleet-winged swallow flew,
And brooding skies took on a deeper, tenderer blue—
When April came.

When April came, the new-leaved trees bent low to
whisper
To tender blades of grass, to wake each tiny sister
That slumbered still, lest any one should miss
The thrilling warmth of Spring's first kiss—
When April came.

When April came, old loves grew fonder still, and
nearer;
Loves that were new seemed more complete and dearer;
The great world's heart pulsed warm 'neath Nature's
smile,
Gave up its sighing for a song the while—
When April came.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE TRICKSTER

Life has a way, a tricky little way,
Of leaguings fast with Fate
To frolic with the destiny of man,
And soon or late
Twist Hope to form Regret,
Or with Hope lure man's soul,
And then with impish glee
Laugh at the tangled whole.

Leagued fast with Fate
Life plots, and schemes, and plans,
Brings far friend close to friend,
Until clasped hands
Cling longingly, and then,—and then
Are sundered quick—
And never touch again.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE SOUL OF THE TREES

There's a ripple like laughter,
A sigh half a moan,
All blended in one in a sad undertone
Like a lost chord of music,—
Mortals call it the breeze;
But list! Hear it pleading?
'Tis the soul of the trees.

VAGRANT VERSES

A MESSAGE TO ONE AWAY

We are so lonely, my heart and I,
At the end of a long, a long, sad day;
But my heart, with a fruitless effort to cheer,
Says bravely: "'Tis only that he is away."
"Oh, foolish heart, will you never learn,"
Chide I with a frown that is all severe,
"That space counts nothing when thoughts may fly
Untrammeled, unasking, from sphere to sphere?
So a thought we'll send, a sweet, warm thought."
"But what of its welcome?" says doubting heart.

The dancing girl looks down from her place,
And doesn't try to coquette
With the little friar in his Dutch-oak frame,
Who has often appeared to forget
His vows and look with a sprightly grace
Full bold in the dancing girl's sweet face:
But now they are sad, and a lonesomeness
Seems each little picture heart to oppress.

A step on the stair? Well, what of that?
It comes and it pauses and passes on,
And my heart and I are foolishly glad
To be left alone when the day is done.
The night sounds of the busy town
Drum faint and far like a thing of dreams,
And the wind in the leaves of the old elm tree
Like a spirit strayed from some woodland seems:
But my heart and I will soon be asleep
And wander in gardens that memories keep.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE LION

(An Idyl of the Jungle)

The dead leaves fall with a rustling sound;
The moon's pale flood of light
Is a winding-sheet for the stark, bare trees
That fling their arms to the night
Like souls in the great and fruitless strife
'Twixt the call of death and the love of life.

A stealthy tread and a deep, warm breath,
The pad of a heavy, cushioned paw
Beats on the grey and moist earth,
And there steals a trembling hush of awe
Through the dank, deep shade of the forest there,
For the king of the jungle seeks his lair!

At the yawning mouth of the deep, dark den
Close-huddle the cubs to await their sire,
And a slanting moonbeam falls athwart
His mate's sleek coat and kindles a fire
In her patient eyes,—for her lord draws near!
And hunger flees like a spectre drear.

He comes,—the lordly king! and his prey
He bears aloft, and his stride grows long,
And his flanks grow tense in the strength of his
pride,

For the prey is worthy the quest so long;
And down at the feet of love is laid
The pluméd bird upon which he has preyed.

VAGRANT VERSES

WHERE THE FAIRIES HIDE

Where do the fairies hide all day,
To which shady nooks do they creep away?
I have sought for them in the heart of the rose,
And down in the dell where the little brook flows,
'Neath the cool lily leaves so tender and white,—
Where I'm sure that they come to dance every night,—
And the bluebells, I thought, could tell just where they
 stay,
But they shook their fair heads and answered me
 "Nay."
Now, I wish you would tell me just where they do stay.

Where the fairies hide I will tell you, my dear:
When morn first wakes up and the sun shines so clear,
They climb the gold beams and are soon far away
To their home up in Cloudland, and there they all stay
Till at night, when we mortals are wrapped fast in
 dreams,
And the moon slowly rises, then they slide down her
 beams
And dance 'neath the lily leaves, tender and white,
And skip on the brook in the silv'ry moonlight.

VAGRANT VERSES

WHAT DO THE VIOLETS SAY

What do the violets say to you?
Do they whisper a message of friendship true,
Or up from the hearts of the wee blue things
Do you catch but the breath of a thousand
Springs?

Oh, a thousand Springs are dear, so dear,
And friendship is sweet through the whole long
year,
But a dearer thing holds the violet blue,—
'Tis the message of love, all tender, all true.

But whether the wee blue floweret brings
The message of friendship or thousand Springs,
Or of love all tender and love all true,
Depends on the list'ning heart of you.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE LITTLE SHOPPERS

With eager, uplifted faces they come,
Half-hid by the taller throng,
All in a puzzling wonderland,
Elbowed and jostled along.

They hold in their tiny hands tight-clutched
The shining pennies and dimes,
Hoarded through all a whole long year,
Tho' tempted to spending oft'times.

Through the chimneys of little keyless banks
They have shaken each tiny mite,
And counted them over and over again,
And dreamed of them in the night.

Such whispered confabs never were held,
Such secrets never were known,
(And the joy of them comes not again,
For they are of childhood alone!)

And bundles are tucked in closets dark,
Or away in crannies high,
Where never a one for whom they are meant
May one small corner espy.

But maybe there's one in whose little heart
The secret's too great to keep,

VAGRANT VERSES

And all in the dark he tells you it,
Before he can go to sleep.

No gift of a truer, fuller love
Shall be yours on the Christmas day
Than is brought by the hand of a little child,—
For the little shoppers make way!

VAGRANT VERSES

CUPID AND THE CHAFING DISH

(An Idyl of the Winter)

When Phyllis tosses back the lace that falls
About her dainty wrists, and from its place
Takes down the chafing dish, and bends with grace
To watch the blue flame 'neath it upward curl,
Then takes of cheese a proper part, and stirs
With this a dash of cayenne, all the while
Watching with pensive eyes and lips that smile,
Then I draw near,—what else could mortal do
To goddess such as Phyllis, who can brew
Such nectar as a "rabbit"?—and forget
The summer girl,—all other girls that I have met,—
In watching Phyllis, while the lamplight falls
Across her burnished hair, and calls
A thousand little loves, all lurking there,
To quickly wake and spread the golden snare,—
For Cupid waits. And I, to grant their wish,
Fall captive to the maid who bends above the dish.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE SONG OF THE LILIES

(A Jubilate)

This the song that the lilies sing,—
A song of hope and a song of Spring,
While wide to the breeze their white hearts fling
A perfume rare beyond telling.

This is the song that the lilies sing,—
A long night passed, an eternal Spring,
A tomb unsealed and a risen King
And peace to the soul dark-dwelling.

List to the song that the lilies sing,—
Softly it folds like an angel wing
O'er hearts that are bruised, and the heavens ring
With the story the lilies are telling.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE LADY AND THE LAKE

When high rides the moon o'er the sky's trackless
blue,
And peeps at her image reflected so true
In the silvery ripples that follow the wake
Of a light little boat that skims over the lake,—
It is then that the sly little god we call Love
Has a chance, of all others, his prowess to prove,
For the witch'ry of moonlight is flooding the air,
And the lake, and the night,—and the maid,—are
so fair.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE JOURNEY ALONE

(Written on the Death of Queen Victoria of England)

No royal pomp or glittering panoply,
No hastening here and there about the court is seen,
No courier, proudly mounted, riding in advance
And the lake, and the night—and the maid—are so fair.
Queen!"

No throngs along the road to bare their heads
And shout, "God save the Queen"; no children
sweet
To scatter flowers before the royal coach
And smile to watch the blossoms bruised 'neath
horses' feet:

And yet, and yet a journey far
Into strange land, whence none return to say,
Strange, sad, with feeble limbs and trembling hands
The woman, mother, Queen, alone has gone to-day.

Will on some gleaming shore where Time is not,
Where royal birth with purity doth stand,
Will on this shore a welcome wait the soul
That journeys lone to-day to the far land?

No royal pomp, mayhap, will 'tend the hour
The woman-soul finds end of its long quest,
No pageantry nor sign of rank or power,—
All journeyings done,—the Queen's at rest!

VAGRANT VERSES

MY SHIP COMES HOME TO ME

Oh, never was ship freighted so,—
No barque that ploughed the ancient Nile,
Sent swiftly on by oars of purest gold,
Laden with ivory, spices, myrrh, from deck to hold,
The silk-clad oarsmen chanting songs the while,
Triumphant that the gods had deigned to smile,—

Oh, never has ship sailed the sea
With cargo like to this my ship brings home to me
From isle afar; no Pharaoh's gold
Counts jot or tittle, for I behold
Thee, my beloved, returned.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE DEBUTANTE

She stands beside her mother, fair and sweet,—
The debutante, with hand outstretched to greet
Her mother's friends. They smile upon her, some
bend low

To murmur compliments; her fair cheeks glow
With flush of innocent and wondering surprise,
Not yet grown used to such or worldly-wise.
I, from my sheltered, palm-screened corner, note
The lily whiteness of her slender throat,
The graceful lines of her slim form, her eyes,
The wayward little curl that 'gainst her temple lies;
The roundness of her charm, its smoothness, and the
grace

Of her whole being, full sure that time nor place
Can lessen this; and I, man-like, thrill to my very soul
With glad sense of possession, while the whole
Sweet picture brings a dimness to my eyes.
I long to fold the slim girl in my arms so tenderwise,
And tell her o'er and o'er how dear life is to me
With her close by to share it, and vow that I will be
Of all her knights the truest; how I will dare and do,
For,—yes, I am her father, and she's my little Sue.

VAGRANT VERSES

LITTLE BROTHER

They came and took my childish hand, while soft they
stepped,
And, wonderingly, they led me to the place where
Little Brother slept,—
Slept lily-fair, with lilies in his hand;
The why the lilies, quiet,—all I could not understand.
Ah, no, not then, not then,—the after-years
The meaning brought, sad-eyed and washed with tears.
And now that time has taught my heart to be more
wise,
And know what lilies mean, hushed step and mist-
dimmed eyes,
I look upon some lily-cradled boy, God-lent to some
earth-mother,
And know the dull, dull misery of it—for so slept
Little Brother!

VAGRANT VERSES

FOUR-LEAVED CLOVER

She laughingly bent her head, and stooped
Where the bright warm sun shone over
The moist sod that her light feet trod,
And picked a four-leaved clover.

She raised her head, 'neath the bonnet blue
I could see the bright eyes smiling,
And the dainty grace of her winsome face
Was far more than clovers bequiling.

“What is it,” she murmured, “the story says
You must do with a four-leaved clover?
‘Put it down in your shoe, then’—they say it is
true—
‘You will surely find your lover:

‘The first one you meet as you pass along,
If he pause by the way to greet you,
You will surely wed’; so the story said,—
I wonder, my prince, if I’ll meet you?’”

Then down on the grass knelt the little maid,—
That day she would find her lover,—
And her shoe unlaced and the clover placed,
Not dreaming he stood above her.

VAGRANT VERSES

The sun looked down when I lifted her up,
And smiled when I told her I loved her,
And the birds sang gay as we went that day
Over fields all abloom with clover.

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This morning I read from a worn book,—
As I turned the pages over
From the leaves somewhere, put away with care,
There slipped a four-leaved clover.

VAGRANT VERSES

TO A FIELD FLOWER

Marguerite, so fair and sweet,
When the day is dying,
And athwart the star-lit sky
Swallows swift go flying,
Then you across your heart of gold
Soft white fingers gently fold,
Like some nun in convent old
Kneels at even praying.

Marguerite, so fair and sweet,
When the day is dying,
And across the path we've trod
Shadows dark are lying,
Teach us then your secret, pray,
That we may, too, at close of day
With hearts all pure and white hands say,
"Peace cometh with the even."

VAGRANT VERSES

THE WIND ACROSS THE CORN

When o'er the face of morning
The timid sunbeams stray,
And bring a touch of rose-pink
To mingle with the grey,
And there falls a hush expectant,—
Strange, sweet stillness of the morn,—
'Tis then I hear the singing
Of the wind across the corn.

Like a lullaby, low-murmured,
Soft and gentle, first it comes,
Then in louder tones, long-dwelling
On some chord by Nature strung,
Till the past and present vanish,
And anew my faith is born
In the good and true, whilst list'ning
To the wind across the corn.

VAGRANT VERSES

IN A CAFE

Lights, and the music flashing,
The trysting man and the maid,
The one by the door with an anxious look,
With a fear that trust is betrayed,
As he watches in vain for a coming,
And sips of his tasteless wine,
For him there is naught of pleasure
In the music, the glitter, the shine,

The laughing, the banter and jesting,
The talk of a book or play,
The plan for a dance or dinner,
Or a happy going-away,—
And eyes meet eyes in telling
The story all false or all true,
Though lashes would veil their meaning,
As lashes were meant to do:

And I, at my little table,
And thou at its opposite side,
Unconsciously stretched out yearning hands
To bridge the great divide
’Twixt the Eden of laughter and loving
And the hell of a sorrowing heart,
For only he who has missed the wound
Can smile at the trace of the dart.

VAGRANT VERSES

THE WOLF

The grey wolf lurks at my chamber door,
But I jingle my purse of gold,—
For in it there is a goodly heap
And a few odd pieces untold,—
So the grey wolf snarls and slips aside
As I fare forth with haughty stride.

The grey wolf lurks at my chamber door,
Oh, the jingle of gold is small,
The treasure has dwindled till now remains
Only a handful in all,—
But the grey wolf snarls and slips aside
As forth I go in a mask of pride.

The grey wolf lurks on the threshold now,
Oh, the purse is empty of gold,
But I arm myself with a sturdy hope,
And face the world grown cold,—
Though the grey wolf snarls he slips aside,
For still he finds himself denied.

The grey wolf's breath is in the room,
For Hope died yesterday,
But I bow my heart and Faith creeps in
Though oft I have said her nay,—
And the grey wolf cowers as forth we go
And slinks in the shadows and crouches low.

VAGRANT VERSES

US COMMON FOLKS

My, ain't it great the way us common folks is gittin'
writ about!

There's scarce a book or magazine, now'days, that
leaves us out.

Why, onct, you know, we weren't thought fit to grace
a romance page,

An' only lords and ladies held the center of the stage.

But land alive! it's different now,—as different as
kin be,—

Why, only yisterday I read a story an' could see
As plain as day 'twas Deacon Smith the writer writ
about,

An' that there flea-bit roan o' hisn,—yes, sir, I had
to shout

An' hold my sides with laffin. But the thing that
puzzles me

Is how them writer folks kin know and hit things
to a T!

Now, there's Miz Wilkins Freeman, she knows jest
what we think,—

I dunno how she does it, but she puts it down in ink
So there ain't no use denyin'; and, then Miss Alice
Brown,

She's got a mighty insight into folks outside o' town.
But the list's too long ter mention o' them that's
come ter see

VAGRANT VERSES

That hearts and souls ain't bounded by no special
boundary,—

That hopes and fears aire common to the gen'ral lot
o' man,

An' the Lord ain't subdivided in His universal plan.

But it ain't only rural folks that's gittin' writ about,
There's lots o' poor an' lowly chaps in town that's not
left out;

It tells in books an' magazines how hard's their way
in life,

How sunless aire their little rooms, how grindin' is
the strife.

An' sometimes when I browse about, alookin' for a ad.,
I come acrost a story that makes me awful sad,—
A simple little story that sorter makes me see
The medder brook, the distant church, an' buddin'
apple tree.

Yes, sir, I tell you it's jest great, this gettin' writ
about;

I'm glad them clever writer folks no longer leaves
us out,

But come sometimes an' set awhile, as 'twere, an' take
our hand

An' let us know they sympathize an', likewise,
understand.

VAGRANT VERSES

MY GIFT

Dearest, 'tis not of gold, nor with bright jewels set
The gift I bring to you on this glad Christmas morn;
Men will not stop to praise,—and yet
'Tis such that kings more happily have worn
Than glittering coronet.

Dearest, the gift I bring is locked within
The casket of my heart,—thou only hast the key;
A woman's love. Take it, beloved, 'tis thine,
And in the taking let me be
Blessed through the giving.

VAGRANT VERSES

THAT WONDERFUL THING

I saw it first in the eyes of her
Who here did give me birth,—
That light that is not of land or sea
But lent by heaven to earth,—
As she bent above my childish head
And held my childish hand,
I saw it then, my soul leapt up
But did not understand.

And now, when spirit has quickened sight,
That wonderful thing I see
Alike in the palace's stately halls,
And alike where the poorest be,—
That wonderful thing that is not of earth
But lent by heaven above,—
That light in a woman's eyes alone,
The light of a mother-love.

VAGRANT VERSES

SORROW THE TEACHER

Sad-eyed Sorrow sat and wept,
Rue-flowers crowned her brow,
Close the darkling shadows crept,
Ghosts of Then and Now,—
Grey, sad ghosts of Then and Now,
Blighted hope and broken vow.

Sad-eyed Sorrow bowed her head
While the throng went by,
Gay and laughing went the throng
With averted eye,—
Quickly went the gay throng by,
Sorrow's touch would all deny.

Sad-eyed Sorrow raised her head,
Grandeur marked her mien,
For before her darkling place
Bowed a soul serene—
“Sorrow great, my teacher, thou,
Sorrow with the rue-crowned brow!”

VAGRANT VERSES

THE LITTLE BOOK

How wondrous wide has life e'er seemed to me!—
Wide, arching dome of sky, wide river, waving tree
And all the whole great family
Of men and women, and the tiny, helpless things
That cling to earth or try their fluttering wings.

For each of these I've felt a kinship deep,
With each of these I've smiled or bent to weep—
But now,—but now, with Life's last candle lit
I find 'tis but a little book,—one page,
Whereon your name is writ!

